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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4537  
INFO AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE PRIORITY  
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SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

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STATE FOR D, P, AF, AF/RSA, AF/S AND PM  
DOD FOR OSD/ISA/AFR (WHELAN)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/15/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [BC](#)  
SUBJECT: BOTSWANA GIVES GREEN LIGHT TO AFRICOM SURVEY

REF: A. GABORONE 1249 AND PREVIOUS  
[1](#)B. STATE 140052

Classified By: CDA Philip R. Drouin; Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Mompoti Merafhe, Botswana's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MFAIC), convoked the Charge (accompanied by ODC Chief) Monday morning October 15 to his office in order to present the GOB's formal reply to our recent demarche on AFRICOM (Ref A). Minister Merafhe said, "in principle, Botswana is not adverse to the idea of hosting AFRICOM." He went on to offer that Botswana "accepts that it has been short-listed" as a possible hosting site for AFRICOM. He did recognize that this is not yet a formal USG offer to situate an AFRICOM element in Botswana, but the GOB welcomes the visit of the USG assessment/survey team as part of this ongoing process. "Then the real discussions and negotiations on this can begin," he added. The Minister apologized that he had not been able to give us a firm reply by last Friday, October 12, as he had initially promised (he did speak with the Ambassador), but he had needed to coordinate with senior GOB officials and the President was away from Gaborone.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) The Charge thanked the Minister for this useful information and promised to convey this to Washington immediately. He added that the Embassy will be in close contact with appropriate GOB counterparts in the coming days to coordinate arrangements of the visiting assessment team.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) Comment: We see nothing unusual about the Foreign Minister's seemingly reserved and diplomatic "in principle" remark. The GOB is indeed interested in learning more about what the USG has to offer on AFRICOM, and in hosting an element here. We believe the Minister used neutral language in that just as the USG has yet to formally decide "yes or no" in offering AFRICOM to Botswana, the GOB is also reserving and exercising its rights to say "yes or no" in the event a formal offer is presented and negotiations begin in earnest. As we were escorted out of the Ministry, the visibly ebullient MFAIC Permanent Secretary thanked us for coming over on short notice, adding that "the Vice President personally insisted that (we) were given this important news right away." We also understand that the President is favorably disposed to hosting AFRICOM in Botswana, whatever the composition of the element here might look like. End Comment.

DROUIN